

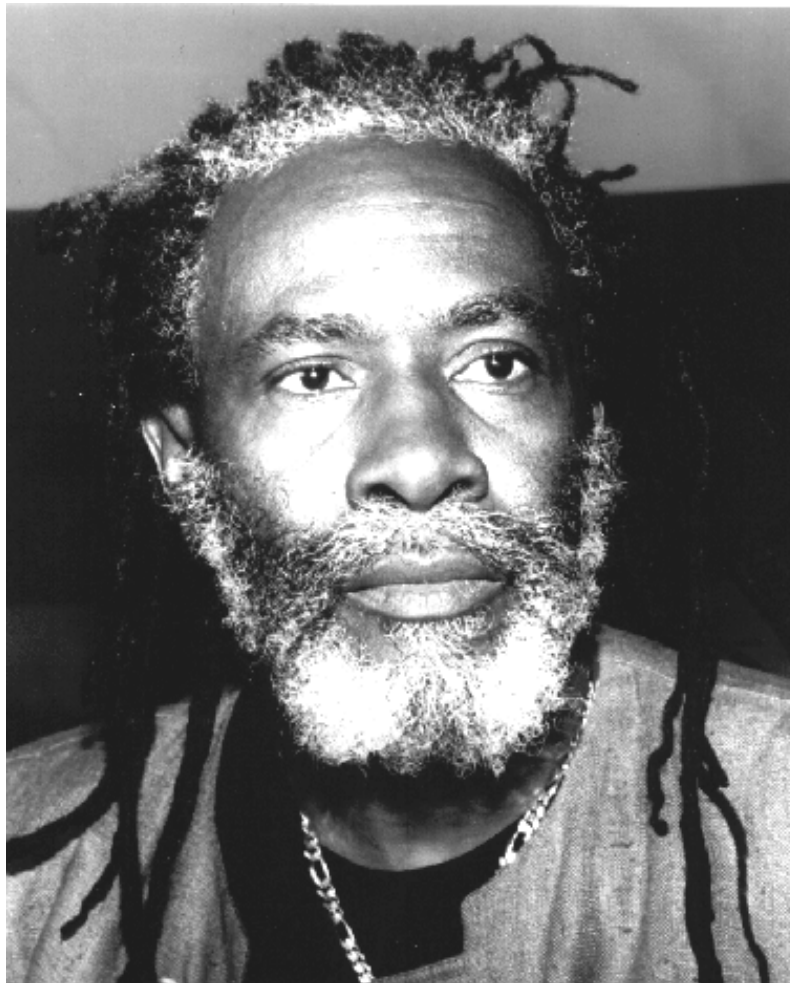


## Communist University Introductions

*These texts may be used as “openings to discussion” of the original reading texts that are supplied by the CU. They are not intended to be authoritative or conclusive. They are contributions to discussion like any other such contributions. The introductions are not a substitute for the reading texts.*

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### Anti-Imperialism, War and Peace, Part 0



[“Do you remember the days of slavery?”](#) – Burning Spear

# Short General Introduction

We are about to begin a new course on the Communist University: **Anti-Imperialism, War and Peace.**

The series begins with Chapter 1 of Clausewitz's "On War", described by one critic (Bernard Brodie) as *"Not simply the greatest, but the only great book on war"*. Clausewitz shows the dialectical (or in Clausewitz's own terms "reciprocal") nature of any study of war. He also shows that war can only be an interval between negotiations. It is the pursuit of politics by other means, makeshift means which cannot be conclusive, but which have to yield in due course to politics again.

We are for peace but we have to be prepared for war. Although we have no interest in bloodshed, we are not pacifists. We seek the ascendancy of the working proletariat. We know that the bourgeois power is everywhere defended with brutal force.

The ANC democratic breakthrough of 1994 owes its existence, in part, to successful armed struggle. Our breakthrough is in turn a part of a historic worldwide struggle against Imperialism, which has often been, and continues to be, an armed struggle. Yet our South African armed struggle is barely acknowledged. Instead, bourgeois virtues are daily paraded in front of us by bourgeois "role models". South African police shoot demonstrators, while bourgeois pacifism is pushed as a compulsory ideology for the rest of us.

The above paragraph was written before the Marikana massacre of 2012. Post-apartheid police fired on demonstrators during the 2007 public service strike, and on earlier occasions. The majority of police in South Africa are organised in a COSATU-affiliated union. In the matter of state coercion, there are many contradictions.

Internationally in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Imperialism has embarked upon a series of wars, including wars in Africa, which have the character of "underdeveloping" once again and subordinating, or recolonising, African countries.

An example is the destruction of Libya by the Imperialist forces of NATO in 2011.

In 2015 there was a refugee crisis in Europe which is the direct result of Imperialist aggression in Libya, in Syria, and in African countries such as Mali.

The struggle with Imperialism is an active struggle. It produces dramatic manifestations and upheavals, all the time.

It will be necessary to have a frank look at the question of the military. The political democracy – ourselves – must know enough about war to be able to oversee and to command the military, and all of the “special bodies of armed men”. The military must always be subordinate to the democratic political authority.

This is the most important thing to know. The military must always be subordinate to the political. We will return to this question repeatedly during the course.

- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).
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### Anti-Imperialism, War and Peace, Part 1



[Carl Clausewitz, 1780-1831](#)

## On War

Michael Howard, translator of Clausewitz' work, and author of "[Clausewitz](#)", opens his Introduction with a quote from one Bernard Brodie, about Clausewitz: *"His is not simply the greatest, but the only great book about war;"* and Howard records his own agreement with this assessment.

If you can get it, Howard's book helps readers a lot towards understanding Clausewitz' "[On War](#)" (Chapter 1, the summarising chapter, is attached) but in one respect Howard appears to be mistaken.

After describing Clausewitz' "dialectic" (e.g. the relationship between physical and moral forces; between historical knowledge and critical judgement; between idea and manifestation; between "absolute" and "real" war; between attack and defence; and between ends and means) Howard writes: *"The dialectic was not Hegelian: it led to no synthesis which itself conjured up its antithesis. Rather it was a continuous interaction between two poles, each fully comprehensible only in terms of the other."*

But it would seem to be perfectly [Hegelian](#) to conceive of such a unity and struggle of opposites; and as to whether Clausewitz's dialectic lacked a forward dynamic, or not, is something that can be settled at once by reading only a few pages; whereupon it will be found that Clausewitz is surely one of the most dynamic authors ever.

Clausewitz was ten years younger than Hegel. He died only two days after Hegel, on 16 November 1831. They were both victims of the same cholera epidemic.

Since Hegel's was the official philosophy of Prussia, and Clausewitz was in charge of the Prussian War College in Berlin for twelve years, while Hegel was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Berlin, it is impossible to believe that Clausewitz was not familiar with Hegel's then highly fashionable ideas.

These were the same Hegelian ideas that seized the imagination of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (both of whom spent time in Berlin during the late 1830s to early 1840s) and upon which their thinking relied for the rest of their lives. Clausewitz and Marxism are not far apart, neither in their pedigree, nor in the philosophical structure of their thinking.

Much is made, in the commentaries on Antonio Gramsci's 20th-century writings, of the contrast between wars of manoeuvre and of position. But the military breakthrough of Clausewitz's lifetime was the French revolutionary campaign against its neighbours, including Prussia, which had rendered obsolete, already in the 1790s, the ancient military alternatives of march and siege which were the limits of Gramsci's military analogies, still, in the 1930s.

Although a servant of the Prussian crown, what Clausewitz described was warfare in the age of mass democracy. As one who had fought against Napoleon Bonaparte,

Clausewitz had understood Napoleon's new kind of warfare, as well as, or better than, anyone else.

Clausewitz defined strategy and tactics as "the linking together of separate battle engagements into a single whole, for the final object of the war." To define strategy in this way, as end, and tactics as means, was a profound contribution which we in South Africa have benefited from. "Strategy and Tactics" has been the name of the ANC's main theoretical document for 46 years; for its conception, at least in part, we owe a debt to Clausewitz

Equally as profound is the complex of thinking around Clausewitz' well-known understanding of war as an extension of politics by other means.

Not only does this mean that war is always and everywhere subordinate to politics; but it also means that war (the breakdown of negotiation and the resort to force) must, and can only, return the parties to the negotiating table. War is an interlude of brutality between negotiations. This was Clausewitz's most famous insight.

To sum up: The world of 1848, when the [Communist Manifesto](#) was first published, was already charged up with historical potential by great preceding events, first and foremost among them being the Great French Revolution, with the Napoleonic Wars that followed it; and also by great thinkers and writers, foremost among them [G W F Hegel](#) and Carl von Clausewitz, whose insights will assist us to understand the place of violence in the history of revolution.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [On War, Chapter 1, What is War?, 1827, Clausewitz](#).
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1848 in Berlin

## 1850 Address to the Communist League

When history is on the move the changes run all over the place. The job of the communists is invariably to urge history on, and to push all the players, including the bourgeoisie, to play their parts to the utmost extent.

The phrase "permanent revolution" belongs first to Marx, and not to Trotsky. It comes from the March, 1850 Address given by Karl Marx to the Central Committee of the Communist League, of which "permanent revolution" are the last two words. See the attachment or below for a link to a downloadable file of this great document.

"Permanent revolution" only means a qualitative change that will be defended.

It does not mean that the revolution is irreversible.

Nor does it mean that the same revolution has to be repeated constantly, like the punishment of Sisyphus.

The March, 1850 Address to the Communist League is an internationalist document. At the time, the newly formed communist organisations were active all over Europe, in a time when monarchies were falling and feudalism was on the way out in many countries.

This document is also a fore-runner of the **National Democratic Revolution**. In those days, there were revolutionary class struggles going on between the bourgeoisie and the feudal reactionaries, and also between the bourgeoisie and the new proletariat that it was creating. Marx shows that class alliances were necessary, and that democracy needed to be extended to the utmost possible degree. Class alliance and democracy remain the key elements of the National Democratic Revolution.

Read this powerful document with care and attention!

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Address to the Communist League Central Committee, March 1850, Marx](#).
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Revolution in Paris, France: February 1848

## The First International

The [Communist Manifesto](#) is a deliberately internationalist document. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were deployed to write it by the international [Communist League](#), of which they were members. The League was strongly based among European continental workers in London, where the first edition was printed (in German) while Marx was running a part of it in Brussels, Belgium. Engels was in Germany, and Communist League members were in action in [many other countries](#), including France.

The Manifesto's publication coincided almost exactly with the outbreak of revolution in France, in February of 1848, which quickly spread to other countries. The final [Chapter IV](#) of the Manifesto says among other things that: *"... the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things,"* and it finishes with the famous slogan ***"Working Men of All Countries, Unite!"***

The Communist Manifesto is one of the first two books of Marxism to come into the public realm. Both were written and published in 1847/early 1848 (the other book is "The Poverty of Philosophy").

Marxism was internationalist from the start and it has never ceased to be so.

Most of the revolutions of 1848 were aimed at overthrowing feudal monarchies, or in other words **turning kingdoms into republics**, which necessarily meant



supporting the republican faction of the bourgeoisie in the anti-monarchy revolution. The content of Marxist internationalism to this day includes relentless opposition to monarchy.

Marx's 1864 Address to the International Working Men's Association ([The First International](#)) was the consequence of his being invited and elected to the leadership of that organisation, formed in London in a hall next to where the South African High Commission now stands. Please read the Address in the attached or downloadable document. Marx had been in exile in London since 26 August 1849 after being banished in quick succession from Belgium, Germany and France. By 1864, Marx's reputation was that of being the foremost internationalist of his time.

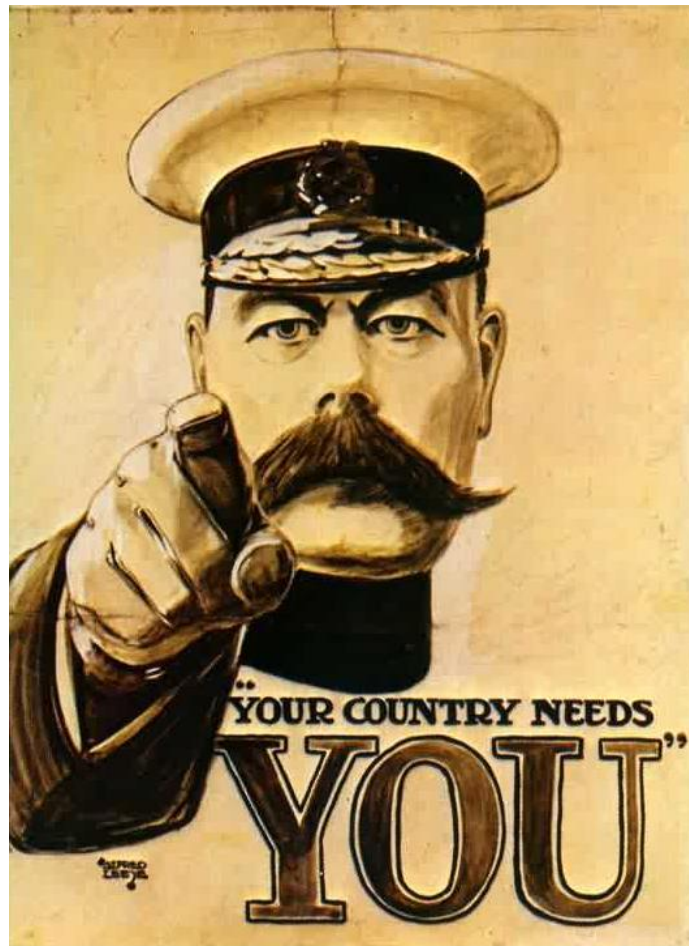
The First International survived until the fall of the Paris Commune in 1871. The [Second International](#) was established at a gathering in Chur, Switzerland ten years later in 1881, two years before Marx's death in 1883 and fourteen years before Engels' death in 1895. The Second International fostered Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg among many others. Its collapse in 1914 marked the great division between the opportunists (such as the "renegade" Kautsky) who in the face of imperialist war folded their internationalism and became cowardly national chauvinists, and on the other hand the true internationalists like Luxemburg and Lenin who opposed the imperialist war. These latter ones, the true internationalists, were also the communists, who established the communist parties of today.

If the workers of the world had remained united against war in 1914, there would not have been any war.

The [Third International](#), also called the [Communist International](#) (or Comintern) was launched in Soviet Russia less than two years after the October Revolution, in 1919, and in 1921 it admitted the Communist Party of South Africa into membership, thus founding the party that is today known as the South African Communist Party, the SACP.

The history of the communists is an unbroken line of internationalism of which the SACP is an inseparable part. The SACP is still internationalist. It continues to promote the same relentless anti-monarchical, anti-feudal, anti-colonial, anti-neo-colonial, anti-imperialist cause as before; and it will do so until the day of continental permanent proletarian revolution dawns in Africa.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [International Working Mens' Association Inaugural Address, 1864, Marx](#).



Lord Kitchener poster, 1914

## Imperialism

This is the second part of a series on Anti-Imperialism, War and Peace. We are not only concerned to discover Imperialism, but to see it in its particular aspect of war-mongering. [Image: Lord Kitchener, master of war and lying face of Imperialism]

In Chapter 7 of “[Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism](#)” (attached) Lenin “sums up” in a highly compressed way as to what capitalist imperialism is. In the first paragraph, among other things, he says:

*“...the monopolies, which have grown out of free competition, do not eliminate the latter, but exist above it and alongside it, and thereby give rise to a number of very acute, intense antagonisms, frictions and conflicts.”*

A little later on Lenin writes: “... politically, imperialism is, in general, a striving towards violence and reaction.” The truth of this statement has never been more apparent than it is today.

South Africa has seen Imperialism in all its aspects, but especially in war. It was the [Anglo-Boer War](#) of 1899-1902 that announced Imperialism's intentions to the world, as much as the [Spanish-American War](#) of 1898 did, or the defeat of the [Khalifa Abdallahi](#)'s forces at [Omdurman](#) in Sudan by the British under Kitchener in that same year of 1898. The system of state-monopoly capital and dominance of the mineral-energy complex over the South African productive economy dates from that time, and it has never been fundamentally changed. To change it will mean a new confrontation with Imperialism.

Imperialism is a system of war. Lenin pours scorn on *"Kautsky's silly little fable about 'peaceful' ultra-imperialism,"* calling it *"the reactionary attempt of a frightened philistine to hide from stern reality."*

Lenin concludes:

*"The question is: what means other than war could there be under capitalism to overcome the disparity between the development of productive forces and the accumulation of capital on the one side, and the division of colonies and spheres of influence for finance capital on the other?"*

The age of Imperialism, for nearly 120 years, has been an age of war, just as Lenin predicted it would be. From Lenin's work to that of William Blum's ["Killing Hope"](#) it is clear that Imperialism is an aggressive force which at some stage will have to be confronted, and annihilated. One cannot hope to be exempt from this confrontation forever.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Chapter 7, 1916, Lenin](#).
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Lenin in disguise, 1917

## Consequences of Imperialist War

The origin of the Age of Imperialism, when it became dominant in the world, were in the Imperial wars at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and most notably, the Anglo-Boer War.

The Anglo-Boer War is the most typical of these original wars, because it showed most clearly what the nature of the new capitalist Imperialism was. Britain made war on the Boer Republics, not so as to rule them directly, and certainly not to liberate the black people living under those racist regimes; but only to possess the gold mines and other such assets as they might wish to have.

The recent Imperialist war on Libya is not different in overall nature.

The typical tactic of Imperialism is not direct colonialism, but indirect, neo-colonialism. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century went on, the obligations that went with direct rule were increasingly abandoned. As a counter to the National Democratic Revolutions, neo-colonialism was more and more substituted for the older system of direct colonial rule.

This much was described by Lenin in the text that went with the previous post in this series. Lenin paid close attention to the question of Imperialism and wrote a lot about it.

It may be helpful for us to look briefly at the general situation before 1916, and thereafter. The Great Powers had gone to war in 1914, as a consequence of the tensions that Imperialism had brought with it, in a finite, limited world that had been divided between the major powers, but unevenly.

The Workers' (Second) International had, instead of opposing the war, collapsed. The socialist parties of the contending powers had nearly all opted to support their different bourgeois governments in the terrible mutual slaughter and destruction.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks refused to support the war. They formed the major force in the small "Zimmerwald" International, together with other formations that wanted to maintain the international working-class position of opposition to capitalist war.

By that time Lenin had been in exile for many years. He returned from Switzerland to Russia in April, 1917, a few weeks after the February revolution of that year.

In "The Nascent Trend of Imperialist Economism" (attached), Lenin attacks the "Imperialist Economism" that is against the right to self-determination and against democracy.

Imperialist Economism has *"the knack of persistently 'sliding' from recognition of imperialism to apology for imperialism (just as the Economists of blessed memory slid from recognition of capitalism to apology for capitalism),"* says Lenin.

"Economism" is Syndicalism, or in South African parlance, "Workerism". It is the belief that trade union struggles alone can solve the problems of the working class. It is reformist, and it relies upon the promises of development of the capitalist economy, with no plans to overthrow it.

"Imperialist Economism" took the reformist logic one step further, to say that Imperialism should be allowed to develop to its fullest, in the belief that when the whole world had become one big monopoly, it could simply be taken over and re-named socialism. The Imperialist Economists promoted the idea that socialism was the end-destination of the Imperialist bus-ride, and that all that was necessary was to get on the bus and encourage Imperialism's progress, in the name of socialism.

The German Social-Democrat Karl Kautsky, whom Lenin called a "renegade", and "no better than a common liberal", became the prophet of Imperialist Economism.



In the face of this particular brand of treacherous liquidationism, Lenin was obliged to re-state the necessity for the right of nations to self-determination (see the second attached item). This is a longer document. In it, early on, under the heading “Socialism and the Self-Determination of Nations”, Lenin wrote: *“We have affirmed that it would be a betrayal of socialism to refuse to implement the self-determination of nations under socialism.”*

So as not to make this introduction too long, let us sum up:

- There is no final separation between socialism and internationalism (“Workers of the World, Unite!”) but
- Nations have the right of self-determination

Using the next item we will see the consequence of this struggle of ideas, as it affected the world after the Russian Revolution, and after the Imperialist world war of 1914 -1918 was over. We will see that Lenin personally, and the Communist International in particular, were able to map out the line of march for the National Democratic Revolutions that subsequently liberated most of the planet, including, eventually, South Africa, from direct colonialism.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [The Nascent Trend of Imperialist Economism, 1916, Lenin](#), and [The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, 1916, Lenin](#), and [Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up, 1916, Lenin](#).**
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Symbol of Class Alliance

## Genesis of the NDR

The Hammer and Sickle emblem of the communists was invented in Russia in 1917. **It is a symbol of class alliance between two distinct classes: proletarian workers, and peasants.**

Peasants often work hard and they are often poor, but they are not the same as the working proletariat of the towns. Nor are they the same as the rural proletariat. So the hammer and the sickle are not two identical things. They represent two different things, allied.

Practical politics is always a matter of alliance, and in different circumstances, different alliances are called for. Communists commonly regard an alliance between workers and peasants as normal. Proletarian parties have likewise, in the past, often attempted class alliances with (other) parts of the bourgeoisie against feudalism, or against colonialism.

Alliances are normal and necessary, in order to isolate and thereby to be able to defeat an adversary; and equally, to avoid being isolated and defeated by that adversary. Karl Marx had practiced class alliance from at least 1845 onwards, and had written extensively about it, notably in "[The Class Struggles in France](#)", the [1850 Address to the Communist League](#), and the "[18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire](#)".

The question of the appropriate alliances in the anti-colonial and anti-Imperialist struggle was bound to arise.

The origin of the specific type of class alliance that is nowadays referred to by the term **National Democratic Revolution** can be precisely located in the Second Congress of the Communist International (2CCI), in the discussion in the Commission on the National and Colonial Question, reported to the plenary by V. I. Lenin on 26 July 1920 (attached).

The first, founding Congress of the Communist International (“Comintern”) had taken place in March, 1919, a little over a year after the October 1917 Russian Revolution. It fulfilled the tenth of Lenin’s “**April Theses**”: “*We must take the initiative in creating a revolutionary International*”.

The very first “International Working Men’s Association”, of which Karl Marx had been a founder member in 1864, had been disbanded in 1871 after the fall of the Paris Commune.

The Second International fell apart in 1914, when most of the Social-Democratic workers’ parties backed the bourgeois masters of war in the conflict between the Imperialist powers.

The communists, led by Lenin, had held out against that betrayal. After the revolutionary victory in Russia they lost very little time before constructing a Third, Communist International. It was naturally and explicitly anti-Imperial and anti-colonial, and at its Second Congress (the “2CCI”) in 1920, decisively so.

In his report to the 2CCI on the National and Colonial Question, Lenin says:

*“We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the **national-revolutionary movement** rather than of the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ movement. It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of **peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships**... However, the objections have been raised that, if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries...”*

Here we find, for the first time, all the makings of the NDR, including the name, even if the words are not quite in their present-day order. Lenin calls it “national-revolutionary”, but he makes it very clear that he is talking of a democratic class alliance with anti-colonial, anti-Imperialist elements of the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries.

The 2CCI was followed within two months by the famous “[Congress of the Peoples of the East](#)”, in Baku, in the southern part of what was soon to become the Soviet Union. This was the first international anti-colonial conference. It had huge consequences. The remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by world-wide National Democratic Revolutions according to the pattern set by Lenin and his international comrades.

These National Democratic Revolutions included, and still include, the South African NDR.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Report on National and Colonial Question, 2CCI, 1920, Lenin](#).**
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## Uprising

*“To be successful, insurrection must rely not upon conspiracy and not upon a party, but upon the advanced class. That is the first point. Insurrection must rely upon a revolutionary upsurge of the people. That is the second point. Insurrection must rely upon that turning-point in the history of the growing revolution when the activity of the advanced ranks of the people is at its height, and when the vacillations in the ranks of the enemy and in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted and irresolute friends of the revolution are strongest. That is the third point. And these three conditions for raising the question of insurrection distinguish Marxism from Blanquism.”*

Thus wrote Lenin [Image], in “Marxism & Insurrection” (attached; download linked below), in September 1917, just before the Great October Russian Revolution.

Insurrection must rely upon the advanced class, and not upon the party. It must rely on an uprising of the people, and be timed to coincide with their maximum degree of resolution and the maximum degree of vacillation in the ranks of their enemies.



Lenin concludes:

*In order to treat insurrection in a Marxist way, i.e., as an art, we must at the same time, without losing a single moment, organise a **headquarters** of the insurgent detachments, distribute our forces, move the reliable regiments to the most important points, surround the Alexandriusky Theatre, occupy the Peter and Paul Fortress, arrest the General Staff and the government, and move against the officer cadets and the Savage Division those detachments which would rather die than allow the enemy to approach the strategic points of the city. We must mobilise the armed workers and call them to fight the last desperate fight, occupy the telegraph and the telephone exchange at once, move our insurrection headquarters to the central telephone exchange and connect it by telephone with all the factories, all the regiments, all the points of armed fighting, etc.*

*“Of course, this is all by way of example, only to illustrate the fact that at the present moment it is impossible to remain loyal to Marxism, to remain loyal to the revolution **unless insurrection is treated as an art.**”*

Insurrection is an art! This is a short document, comrades, and readable. Read it.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Marxism and Insurrection, 1917, Lenin](#).
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## Guerrilla Warfare

Just after the first Russian Revolution of January, 1905, Lenin wrote “Guerrilla Warfare” (attached). Almost immediately in this work, Lenin plants his experienced revolutionary feet on solid revolutionary ground, thus:

*“Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle.*

*“It recognizes the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not “concoct” them, but only generalizes, organizes, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement.*

*“Absolutely hostile to all abstract formulas and to all doctrinaire recipes, Marxism demands an attentive attitude to the mass struggle in progress, which, as the movement develops, as the class consciousness of the masses grows, as economic and political crisis become acute, continually gives rise to new and more varied methods of defence and attack.*

*“Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle. Under no circumstances does Marxism confine itself to the forms of struggle possible and in existence at the given moment only, recognizing as it does that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, inevitably arise as the given social situation changes. In this respect Marxism learns, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to teach the masses forms of struggle invented by ‘systematisers’ in the seclusion of their studies.”*

Later in the same work, in which he defends the Latvian comrades who have taken up some forms of armed struggle, Lenin says:

*“... such an objection would be a purely bourgeois-liberal and not a Marxist objection, because a Marxist cannot regard Civil War, or guerrilla warfare, which is one of its forms, as abnormal and demoralizing in general.*

*“A Marxist bases himself on the class struggle, and not social peace. In certain periods of acute economic and political crisis the class struggle ripens into a direct Civil War, i.e., into an armed struggle between two sections of the people. In such periods a Marxist is obliged to take the stand of Civil War. Any moral condemnation of Civil War would be absolutely impermissible from the standpoint of Marxism.”*

Are you worrying about what form your struggle should take? Read this document, comrades.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Guerrilla Warfare, 1906, Lenin.](#)
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## Socialist-Revolutionaries, Narodniks, and other Adventurists

Our pattern is as follows: There are ten parts, one part per week. In each part there may be up to four items. The main post is given first. The others can be used as alternatives, if preferred, or as additional reading. The whole arrangement is designed to suit study circles who would meet once a week to discuss these texts.

In this part we have gone in reverse chronological order. The third and last item (attached) in this part is from the earlier, pre-revolutionary period, where Lenin is denouncing the “Revolutionary Adventurism” of the “Socialist Revolutionaries”, and in particular is **denouncing terrorism**.

Like Marx and Engels before him, and like the SACP of today, Lenin was faced with false revolutionaries, who pretended to be more revolutionary than the communists, but who were really something else.

The communists are referred to in this pamphlet as “revolutionary Social-Democrats”.

In this Russian case, the false revolutionaries were the petty-bourgeois “Socialist-Revolutionaries” (SRs) and their antecedents, the sentimental “Narodniks”. Both of these types of pseudo-revolutionary are likely to spring up in any revolutionary situation. In general, they represent the strong desire of the ruling class to reappear in a new guise, to steal the very revolution that they have provoked, and therefore to continue their rule in a new form. This is especially the case in a transition, like Russia’s at the time, **from a monarchy to a republic**.

The terrorist SRs called themselves “critics” and they called their revolutionary opponents (i.e. Lenin and the RSDLP) “orthodox”. This is like the liberals and anarchists of today in South Africa who denounce the SACP as “Stalinists” or “vanguardists”, or even as “yellow communists”, while imagining themselves to be free-thinkers.

This document was written in a typical situation, similar to Swaziland today, where there is a dying monarchical autocracy and a large but very poor peasantry, all festering in the dregs of feudalism. There is a dangerous “*absence of ideology and principles*”. Among other important things, Lenin writes:

*“Let the agrarian programme of the Socialist-Revolutionaries serve as a lesson and a warning to all socialists, a glaring example of what results from an absence of ideology and principles, which some unthinking people call freedom from dogma.*

*“When it came to action, the Socialist-Revolutionaries did not reveal even a single of the three conditions essential for the elaboration of a consistent socialist programme: a clear idea of the ultimate aim; a correct understanding of the path leading to that aim; an accurate conception of the true state of affairs at the given moment or of the immediate tasks of that moment.*

*“They simply obscured the ultimate aim of socialism by confusing socialisation of the land with bourgeois nationalisation and by confusing the primitive peasant idea about small-scale equalitarian land tenure with the doctrine of modern socialism on the conversion of all means of production into public property and the organisation of socialist production.*

*“Their conception of the path leading to socialism is peerlessly characterised by their substitution of the development of co-operatives for the class struggle.”*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Revolutionary Adventurism, 1902, Lenin](#).





## Hegemony

We have looked at the basic theory of armed struggle, courtesy of Clausewitz. We have looked at Imperialism, which among other things is a regime of permanent war. And we have looked at the political theory of revolutionary insurrection, also courtesy of Lenin. This course will continue to examine such theoretical problems of war and peace, in the context of the age of Imperialism.

This week we look at the contested concept of “Hegemony”.

The concept of “Hegemony” is contested between those who would wish for a third way, or to quote Robespierre, “a revolution without a revolution”; and on the other hand, those who recognise that there is no such third way, and that the real history and meaning of “hegemony” is no different from “class dictatorship”. In other words, Marx and Engels were right to say at the beginning of the “[Communist Manifesto](#)” that “*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,*” and that the class struggle would have to be fought to a finish.

For many years past this polemic has been conducted around the historical personality and the literary legacy of Antonio Gramsci. People, including academics who should know better, falsely cite Gramsci as if he was a supporter of some third way, which he was not.

Gramsci was an orthodox communist, and was not in the least bit opposed to his contemporary, Lenin. All the material published in recent decades to the effect that Gramsci was a soft kind of communist, or that Gramsci had a theory of revolution (perhaps called “hegemony”) that could succeed without any rudeness or unpleasantness of the Lenin kind, is all spurious and fraudulent.

The term “hegemony” needs to be rescued. A shortened version of Perry Anderson’s long article (New Left Review, I/100, November-December 1976) about all this is attached, and downloadable via the link below. Here is a quotation from it:

*“The term ‘hegemony’ is frequently believed to be an entirely novel coinage—in effect, [Gramsci’s] own invention. Nothing reveals the lack of ordinary scholarship from which Gramsci’s legacy has suffered more than this widespread illusion. For in fact the notion of hegemony had a long prior history. The term gegemoniya (hegemony) was one of the most central political slogans in the Russian Social-Democratic movement, from the late 1890s to 1917.*

*“In a letter to Struve in 1901, demarcating social-democratic from liberal perspectives in Russia, Axelrod now stated as an axiom: ‘By virtue of the historical position of our proletariat, Russian Social-Democracy can acquire hegemony (gegemoniya) in the struggle against absolutism.’ [19] The younger generation of Marxist theorists adopted the concept immediately.*

*“Lenin could without further ado refer in a letter written to Plekhanov to ‘the famous “hegemony” of Social-Democracy’ and call for a political newspaper as the sole effective means of preparing a ‘real hegemony’ of the working class in Russia. [21] In the event, the emphasis pioneered by Plekhanov and Axelrod on the vocation of the working class to adopt an ‘all-national’ approach to politics and to fight for the liberation of every oppressed class and group in society was to be developed, with a wholly new scope and eloquence, by Lenin in What is to be Done? in 1902—a text read and approved in advance by Plekhanov, Axelrod and Potresov, which ended precisely with an urgent plea for the formation of the revolutionary newspaper that was to be Iskra.”*

What Perry Anderson demonstrates is that “hegemony”, far from being an alternative to the working class ascendancy otherwise referred to as the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, is in fact exactly the same idea, and was understood as such without any reservations at all by Antonio Gramsci in all his works.

This article is worth keeping in mind as an insurance against the inevitable return of the fake “hegemony-Gramsci” third-way myth. Tomorrow we will look at a similar but much shorter article.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci, 1976, Perry Anderson](#) (short version).**



[Antonio Gramsci, 1891-1937](#)

## Hegemony Up To Date

We have given first place this week to Perry Anderson. Today, another readable and user-friendly text is offered in the form of Trent Brown's more recent essay on "Gramsci and Hegemony" (attached, and downloadable via the link given below).

Put simply, the idea of "hegemony" is not different from the idea of "dictatorship", as used in the phrases: "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie", for two examples.

Hegemony means class domination over another class, or over all other classes. We may say that Working Class Hegemony is not necessarily always coercive, and that for the most part it would rely upon consent or acquiescence.

But, as Trent Brown points out, the same is true of the bourgeois dictatorship that we have at present. It depends, if not upon actual force, then upon "manufactured consent" backed up by the threat of force. Force and the threat of force are always

present. Violent force will normally be applied without hesitation by any ruling class whenever its hegemony is threatened.

Whether we are using the term “Working Class Hegemony”, or the term “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, it remains the case that the bourgeoisie continues to exist under such dictatorship or hegemony. Capitalist relations will still exist under working class hegemony, but they will be supervised by the working class.

“Dictatorship of the Proletariat” does not mean “Extermination of the Bourgeoisie”.

Trent Brown points out that Gramsci in particular had a well-worked-out theory of how the working class can progress from self-interested economism, otherwise called syndicalism (or in South Africa, “workerism”), through self-conscious class solidarity, to the formation of revolutionary alliances with other classes.

Comrades who may be interested in Gramsci’s legacy beyond the concept of “hegemony”, may like to read the article “[From Organic to Committed Intellectuals or Critical Pedagogy, Commitment, and Praxis](#)” (click to access the web page). For a representative example of Gramsci’s writing, please click here: “[Some Aspects of the Southern Question](#)”.

Trent Brown puts the matter of hegemony like this:

*“Gramsci reckoned that in the historical context that he was working in, the passage of a social group from self-interested reformism to national hegemony could occur most effectively via the political party.”*

This is not different from Lenin’s view.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Gramsci and Hegemony, 2009, Trent Brown](#).**
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[Joe Slovo, 1926-1995](#)

## Hegemony and the NDR

In his 1905 article “[Petty-Bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism](#)” (attached, and linked below), Lenin wrote:

*“Can a class-conscious worker forget the democratic struggle for the sake of the socialist struggle, or forget the latter for the sake of the former? No, a class-conscious worker calls himself a Social-Democrat for the reason that he understands the relation between the two struggles. He knows that there is no other road to socialism save the road through democracy, through political liberty. He therefore strives to achieve democratism completely and consistently in order to attain the ultimate goal - socialism. Why are the conditions for the democratic struggle not the same as those for the socialist struggle? Because the workers will certainly have different allies in each of those two struggles. The democratic struggle is waged by the workers together with a section of the bourgeoisie, especially the petty bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the socialist struggle is waged by the workers against the whole of the bourgeoisie. The struggle against the bureaucrat and the landlord can and must be waged together with all the peasants, even the well-to-do and the middle peasants. On the other hand, it is only together with the rural proletariat that the struggle against the bourgeoisie, and therefore against the well-to-do peasants too, can be properly waged.”*

Joe Slovo wrote (in the [SA Working Class and the NDR](#), 1988):



*“There is, however, both a distinction and a continuity between the national democratic and socialist revolutions; they can neither be completely telescoped nor completely compartmentalised. The vulgar Marxists are unable to understand this. They claim that our immediate emphasis on the objectives of the national democratic revolution implies that we are unnecessarily postponing or even abandoning the socialist revolution, as if the two revolutions have no connection with one another.”*

Hegemony is mentioned in the first discussion document prepared by the SACP for the Special National Congress held in December, 2009, and particularly the following section, taken from the last page of the document.

*“... it is important that as communists we are clear that working class HEGEMONY doesn't mean working class exclusivity (still less party chauvinism). Working class hegemony means the ability of the working class to provide a consistent strategic leadership (politically, economically, socially, organisationally, morally – even culturally) to the widest range of social forces – in particular, to the wider working class itself, to the broader mass of urban and rural poor, to a wide range of middle strata, and in South African conditions, to many sectors of non-monopoly capital. Where it is not possible to win over individuals on the narrow basis of class interest, it can still be possible to win influence on the basis of intellectual and moral integrity (compare, for instance, our consistent ability, particularly as the Party, to mobilise over many decades a small minority of whites during the struggle against white minority rule).”*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Petty-Bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism, 1905, Lenin.](#)
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Christopher Caudwell, 1907 – 1937

## Violence

The [Communist Manifesto](#) of 1848 ends:

*“The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the **forcible** overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!”*

Earlier, it says:

*“the **violent** overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.”*

When it comes to the expropriation of the expropriators, the working class will not ask permission.

The proletarian revolution will be an act of force, with no appeal, and *in that sense* it is bound to be a violent revolution, which *does not mean* that bloodshed is necessary.

Blood need not be shed. But the revolution will make its own laws. Otherwise, it would not be a revolution.

### **Bourgeois violence**

The bourgeoisie is a violent class. It acquired its position by bloody violence and it maintains its position by constant applications of physical violence and bloodshed. It is the bourgeoisie that invented permanent standing armies, the permanent police force, and the prisons, all of which are in constant use.

In spite of all of its protestations to the contrary, the bourgeoisie is not afraid of physical confrontation. It is well prepared for bloody violence.

What the bourgeoisie fears is not bloodshed, but the other kind of violence: that of unilateral expropriation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The bourgeoisie fears the violence that takes, not blood, but property.

### **Caudwell**

In the previous parts of this series, we have read Clausewitz, Marx and Lenin on the political/military nature of violence. In this part we will take an essay of Christopher Caudwell (attached; download linked below) so as to establish the moral and/or philosophical basis of [Pacifism and Violence](#), if any such can be found.

[Christopher Caudwell](#) (1907 – 1937) wrote some extraordinary communist literature that was only published after he was killed while fighting the fascists in the Spanish Civil War, as an internationalist from England, and as a member of the International Brigades.

Much of Caudwell's best work was published posthumously under the famous title: "[Studies in a Dying Culture](#)". Three of the essays can be found in the [Caudwell section of the Marxists Internet Archive](#), including his essay "[On Liberty](#)", which contains the statement: "*I am a communist because I believe in freedom!*"

Another Caudwell collection was published more recently in hard copy under the title “The Concept of Freedom”.

## **Sheehan**

Another source of Caudwell material (including the image above) is Helena Sheehan’s web site, where Helena has made a [Caudwell centenary page](#) that is very moving, and will tell you many reasons why Christopher Caudwell is remembered with such passion and love even now, so long after his death.

In “Pacifism and Violence” Caudwell asks almost at once:

*“Are we Marxists then simply using labels indiscriminately when we class as characteristically bourgeois, both militancy and pacifism, meekness and violence? No, we are not doing so, if we can show that we call bourgeois not all war and not all pacifism but only certain types of violence, and only certain types of non-violence; and if, further, we can show how the one fundamental bourgeois position generates both these apparently opposed viewpoints.”*

What do you say when you are confronted by a pacifist follower of M K Gandhi, or by a Quaker? This text can assist you. Today’s downloadable text will help bring the essence of the question into our dialogue.

This text will show you why it is that communists are not pacifists, although we struggle for peace, and why the bourgeoisie can never be peaceful, even when they call themselves pacifists.

- The image of Christopher Caudwell reproduced above was painted by [Caoimhghin O Croidheain](#)
  - The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Pacifism and Violence, 1938, Christopher Caudwell](#).
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**Course: Anti-Imperialism, War and Peace**

**17001, Anti-Imperialism, War and Peace, Intro Booklet 1 of 2**

7654 words